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ABSTRACT

This report provides important criteria for the effective teaching of community college English. The following suggestions are presented to instructors in order to facilitate optimal student learning in college English courses: (1) present content in a meaningful manner, with emphasis on clarifying relevant facts, concepts, and generalizations; (2) develop and maintain student interest by selecting activities that engage the learner; (3) enable students to perceive the purpose in learning, and develop the awareness that motivation can be intrinsic as well as extrinsic (in environmental sources, such as grading, peer recognition, and teacher approval); (4) make adequate provisions for individual differences in the classroom, as students vary in purposes, interest, and personal goals. Another factor to consider in determining motivation is student involvement in extracurricular activities. A variety of methods should be used in the teaching of English, including a combination of lecturing, student input, discussion questions, established learning stations, reference materials, problem-solving, video-tapes with quality objectives, and testing in order to measure goal attainment. Meaning, understanding, and interest are all powerful factors in learning, and will determine the level of student achievement in the classroom. Contains 10 references. (AS)

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Teaching Community College English

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TEACHING COMMUNITY COLLEGE ENGLISH

Students in the junior college must attain optimally. In the English curriculum, learners need to develop proficiency in the communication skills. Thus listening, speaking, reading, and writing abilities should be developed further and continuously. To do this, the English instructor may follow definite criteria of instruction. First, students need to have content presented meaningfully. With meaning, students understand that which has been taught. The instructor needs to clarify relevant facts, concepts, and generalizations to learners. Comprehension of ideas presented is a must, be it the ideas presented by the instructor or by students (Ediger, 1999, Chapter Two).

Second, interests of students need to be developed or maintained. With interest, the student and the English curriculum become one and not separate entities. Securing the attention of learners is vital if they are to attain, achieve, and develop. The English instructor must guide set establishment of students. He/she might then select those activities that secure learner attention and yet assist the latter in goal attainment. Thus if two learning opportunities assist students to achieve an objective, the one that obtains the most interest of students should be implemented (Ediger, 1998, 1-14).

Third, the community college English instructor should help students to perceive purpose in learning. With purpose, students accept inherent reasons for goal attainment. There can be intrinsic purpose whereby the student from within desires to do well in the English class. These students find leaning fascinating for its own sake or for use in problem solving. Subject matter presented by the instructor, as well as from other sources of learning, is accepted as being worthwhile. The learner possesses purpose that comes from within rather than purposes that come from outside the actual learning and teaching situation (Ediger, 1996, 3-25).

Extrinsic motivation or purpose for learning comes from environmental sources, such as securing a high grade for the course or

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receiving recognition from other students for participation during the different class sessions. Opportunities then need to be given students to be active participants in ongoing lessons and units of study (Ediger, 1995, 246-251).

Adequate provision must be made for individual differences in the classroom. Students vary in purposes, interest, and personal goals adhered to. Thus, the instructor must assist learners to further their own objectives in the English curriculum. This can be done through students choosing from among alternatives in developing a related term paper, oral report to be presented to the class, and/or term project to develop and complete. Quality and effort are to be expected from learners in these kinds of experiences (Ediger, 1995, 172-174).

Teaching English

The instructor needs to use a variety of methods to secure and maintain student attention. The instructor may lecture well but if students learn little from these lectures, instruction has been somewhat in vain. One methodology that the junior college English instructor may use is to emphasize heavy input from students in the class. The instructor then encourages students to raise questions for discussion within a contextual situation. Possible answers to the identified questions are discussed. Sequence in learning generally resides within the learner when he/she raises questions for discussion. Heavy input, too, comes from the student when selecting what to learn from among alternatives. A learning stations approach may be used here. At each station there are more tasks than what the English student can complete. Choices need to be made as to which tasks to complete and which to omit. Reference materials at each station guide learners to use that which assists in completing diverse learning opportunities. The English student sequences his/her own activities when selecting sequential tasks to complete. Time on task is vital (Ediger, 1996, 221-225).

Student input into the English curriculum is also in evidence when problem solving procedures are stressed in teaching. Thus the instructor

emphasizes students identify problem areas. For each problem area, a hypothesis needs to be developed. The hypothesis provides a tentative answer. Research is necessary to secure necessary information to test the hypothesis. The hypothesis may then be revised if data indicate the need to do so (Ediger, 1996, 114-117).

Methods may be used in teaching community college English whereby sequence resides within the teacher in a logical curriculum. A well prepared and delivered lecture by the instructor and presented to students emphasizes that sequence resides within the instructor. The instructor sequences content to the best thinking available when a logical English curriculum is in evidence. Content presented originates with the instructor and moves to the learners in the classroom setting. Hopefully, students will perceive sequence or order in learning (Ediger, 1994, 169-174).

Carefully chosen video-tapes with quality objectives may also provide subject matter deductively to students. The developers of the video-tape have thought through carefully which is the best arrangement of ideas presented. Students may not benefit adequately from a learning opportunity when quality sequence is not in evidence. An incoherent video-tape presents subject matter in a way that sentences are not in an order beneficial to student understanding. In a logical developed English curriculum, the instructor must provide opportunities for learners to raise questions, expand upon content presented, and debate that which has been presented. With these approaches, students may clarify subject matter not understood in a logically developed English curriculum (Ediger, 1996, ERIC).

The measurement movement has been quite popular in the instructional arena. Thus the instructor may write measurably stated objectives and arrange them in a hierarchical manner in ascending order of complexity. The English instructor teaches directly to that which is stated in the objective(s). After instruction, the instructor measures if students have been successful in goal attainment. A different teaching strategy is used for unattained objectives. Generally, tests are used to

measure student progress. Through measurement, the instructor can determine if a student has/has not achieved any one goal. Learning opportunities must be matched up with the objectives of the course. Evaluation procedures also are to be aligned with the objectives. Thus the evaluation procedures are valid. What is taught is tested upon. If the test measures consistently, reliability is present be it test-retest, alternate forms, or split-half reliability (Ediger, 1995, Chapters One and Two).

In Closing

Studies from the psychology of learning indicate that the community college English instructor needs to provide subject matter that is meaningful to students. Learners then need to understand that which has been taught. Interest is a powerful factor in learning. Those who have interest in a given activity or experience will achieve more than those who lack interest. Student perceived purpose is vital for learning to have a beginning and an extension. Bored, disinterested students, no doubt, will accomplish little in the community college English curriculum. With perceived purpose, students accept values for studying and learning. Students differ from each other in many ways. The instructor must find ways to provide for individual differences. Students then need opportunities to select titles for term papers and term projects. Also, learners should have ample opportunities to raise questions that are perceived to be salient and significant.

If students are heavily involved in curricular activities, a psychological curriculum is in evidence. Many student choices need to be in evidence to stress a psychological curriculum. Should the instructor basically select the order of experiences for learners, a logical curriculum is being emphasized. The sole determiner of the curriculum would emphasize a logical development of the English class and course of study. Each student must achieve as much as possible in listening, speaking, reading, and writing!

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